

# BRAJ IN BRIEF

An introduction to literary Braj Bhāṣā

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For readers who know Modern Standard Hindi or ‘MSH’, the grammar of Braj Bhasha presents no great problems, and the great poetic wealth of this language lies close at hand. Sometimes Braj and MSH coincide completely: in one Braj poem, for example, the 16th-century poet Sūrdās has Krishna say endearingly *ये मेरे ब्रज लोग*, while a century later, Banārasīdās has a cunning sannyasi advertise his wares with the enticing words *एक मंत्र है मेरे पास*. Elsewhere, it is true, wide differences between Braj and MSH do emerge, but these are less often in syntax (the relationship between words) than in morphology (the form of the words themselves). The purpose of this introduction to Braj grammar – which varies from poet to poet – is to help readers to build on their existing knowledge of MSH to achieve a confident understanding of original Braj texts.

Look for a moment at this (rather contrived) sentence in MSH prose:

मेरा मित्र गोपाल इस पड़ोस की गलियों में होली खेलता था ।

And now compare it with this possible rendering in Braj prose in a style that reflects the language to be encountered in this introduction:

मेरौ मीत गुपाल या परोस की गलियन माहिं होली खेलत हतौ ।

There are ten differences in the eleven words, leaving only the possessive *की* identical in both versions:

**मेरौ** has the Braj masculine singular ending in *-au*, a word-ending which happens to be very rare in MSH and hence stands out as a characteristic of the Braj masculine singular paradigm. It is of course the equivalent of MSH का.

**मीत** is the vernacular derivative (or ‘tadbhava’, defined below) of Sanskrit *मित्र*; MSH nearly always prefers the latter ‘tatsama’ form, while Braj is happy with either.

**गुपाल** (for गोपाल) shows a vowel ‘lightening’ in an unstressed syllable; that is to say, spelling conventions may follow pronunciation rather than etymology. Braj poets, working in tightly defined metrical frameworks, are glad to have such choices.

**या** – this Braj oblique pronoun looks very different from its MSH equivalent इस.

**परोस** – a ‘simplification’ of the retroflex /ṛ/ (MSH पड़ोस) is commonplace in Braj.

- गलियन shows how the Braj oblique plural is written with a nasal consonant (-न, sometimes -नि or -नु ) rather than the nazalised vowel typical of MSH as in गलियों.
- माहिं – this Braj postposition is one of many equivalents to the MSH में (itself also commonly used in Braj), all deriving from the Sanskrit locative मध्ये.
- होरी – a common sound-change between ल and र in a final syllable is seen in होरी < होली.
- खेलत – this participle is equivalent to MSH खेलता.
- हतौ – an auxiliary verb, parallel to MSH था. It again shows the -au ending characteristic of the masculine singular in Braj.

Despite these differences, the overall syntax of the sentence remains unchanged. That being said, it is also true that the conventions of verse construction and poetic diction can seem puzzling at first: poetic word order often differs from that of prose or speech, and many helpful ‘signpost’ words such as conjunctions and auxiliary verbs are creatively omitted in the cause of word economy, or to yield the ambiguity on which poetry thrives. It is therefore important that our first proper encounter with Braj should be with real poetry rather than fabricated prose.

With this in mind we will take a stroll through the language as found in the poetry of Vṛnd, a court poet who tutored Aurangzeb’s grandson Azim-us-Shan in the art of composition three centuries ago, in 1704. In the company of our Mughal class-fellow we will gain an overview of how the language works, and will also encounter some of the tropes, techniques and ideas that distinguish this poetry from other kinds of language use. The couplets quoted here are from a text entitled नीति सतसई ‘Seven Hundred Verses on Polity’; my source is Janārdan Rāv Celer (ed.), *Vṛnd granthāvalī*, Agra 1971.

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## A TOUR OF BRAJ GRAMMAR WITH THE POET VRND

Let’s begin our tour by asking our guide how easy will it be to learn the essentials of Braj, and to enjoy its poetry. *Will we have to work hard?* Vṛnd’s reply –

स्रम ही तैं सब मिलत है, बिन स्रम मिलै न काहि ।  
सीधी अँगुरी घी जम्यौ क्यौ ही निकरै नाँहि ॥१॥



(click icon to hear this couplet)

**By effort alone, everything comes; without effort it comes to no one:  
With straight fingers, congealed ghee will not be extracted at all.**

Vṛnd is quite right of course: achieving anything worthwhile does take some effort! But read his couplet a couple of times and you will quickly pull at least some of its poetic ghee from the pot.

To feel the rhythm of the poem, bear two things in mind. Firstly, every syllable should be fully pronounced (including the short vowels at the ends of words: *srama hi tai saba milata hai...*). Secondly, a line in this *dohā* metre (defined below) has a brief rhythmic pause soon after the halfway mark: in this poem it comes after है in the first line and after जम्यौ in the second; more about this anon. But now, here is the meaning of the poem in MSH:

श्रम से ही सब कुछ मिलता है, श्रम के बिना किसी को [कुछ] नहीं मिलता;  
सीधी उँगली से जमा हुआ घी किसी भी तरह नहीं निकलता ।

The major differences between Braj and MSH encountered here are explained below:

**श्रम** This word for 'labour, effort' reflects Sanskrit श्रम. Although Sanskritic loanwords are common in Braj, their form is often simplified – you could say 'sweetened' or 'domesticated' – by local vernacular pronunciation.

**तैं** The functions of MSH से are carried in Braj by two distinct words, तैं and सौँ; we will see their different functions later. Don't be surprised to see spelling variations such as तैं / तें and सौँ / सों, as Braj orthography is not standardised; nasalization also comes and goes according to scribal whim, and such variations usually have no grammatical significance.

**मिलत** = MSH मिलता (an imperfective participle). The short final syllable -त covers both singular and plural (MSH मिलता / मिलते); the feminine equivalent would normally be मिलति, again with a *short* final vowel.

**मिलै** This third-person verb, ending *-ai* or *-e* regardless of number, has two functions: it is a present tense (often equivalent in sense to मिलत), and it can also be a subjunctive (Hindi मिले). So it is called 'subjunctive-present'.

**काहि** = MSH किसे, though the sense here may be closer to किसी को.

**अँगुरी** = MSH अँगुली, उँगली. As we have seen, a sound-change between ल and र is quite common in the last syllable of Braj words; another example follows in the penultimate word of this couplet.

**जम्यौ** = MSH जमा, 'congealed, set'. There are two things to notice here. Firstly, as we have already seen, the masculine singular ending in Braj is *-au* rather than *-ā*. Then, by contrasting जम्यौ with MSH जमा we find that the Braj participle has picked up a य before the masculine ending. This is because the Braj verb stem is not जम as in MSH, but जमि, ending with a short *-i*; the stem *jami-* followed by the ending *-au* yields *'jami-ai'*, spelt जम्यौ. Similarly, Braj कह्यौ, सुन्यौ, देख्यौ, दियौ, आयौ, गयौ are equivalent to MSH कहा, सुना, देखा, दिया, आया, गया. And the joker in the pack: Braj भयौ is equivalent to MSH हुआ. (Both भयौ and है derive from Sanskrit भवति, and are ultimately cognate with the English verb 'be'.)

हू = MSH भी. The phrase क्यों हू means 'in any way at all', MSH किसी भी तरह.

निकरै Put together what we noticed just now about the ल / र sound-change and the -ai verb ending, and you'll see that this is equivalent to MSH निकले.

नाहिं Easily recognisable as MSH नहीं; in Braj, either syllable in the negative particle can be either long or short, and either syllable can be nasalized or unnasalized – another gift to poets whose verses have to fit strict metrical formulae! In *dohā* 14 below we see yet another spelling – नाहिन.

### THE DOHĀ FORM

The *dohā* metre used by Vṛnd in the *Nīti satsaī* is the most popular couplet metre in pre-modern Hindi. Conveniently for us, these particular *dohās* are independent poems: each couplet can be regarded as a self-contained unit of meaning. Notice how a *dohā* couplet is punctuated: the first line ends in a single *daṇḍa*, and the second with double *daṇḍas*, or a pair of double *daṇḍas* bracketing a stanza number. There is an AA rhyme.

The *dohā* has a simple but rather precise metrical pattern, measured by *mātrās* – 'beats', comparable to the beats used in music. A short vowel (अ इ उ or ऋ) has one *mātrā*, while a long vowel (आ ई ऊ ए ऐ ओ औ) has two: theoretically, it takes twice as long to pronounce as a short vowel. A short vowel before a conjunct consonant (e.g. the first vowel in अन्त or वृन्द) counts as a long syllable: feel the difference in length, or weight, between the opening syllables in the words बचा and बच्चा respectively, and you will see why. Western annotation marks short syllables as ˘, long as ˉ. Thus बचा would be scanned ˘ ˉ, while बच्चा would be scanned ˉ ˉ. In Indian prosody, 'short' syllables are called 'light' (लघु), while 'long' ones are called 'heavy' (गुरु).

A *dohā* line consists of rhythmic 'feet' with the *mātrā* composition 6+4+3, 6+4+1. The comma represents a more substantial rhythmic break or pause, often marked by a comma in modern editions: this pause is called 'caesura' in English < Latin, and यति in Hindi < Sanskrit. Now let us look at the first quarter-verse of our first *dohā*:

6	/ 4	/ 3
˘ ˘ - -	/ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘	/ ˘ -
स म	ही तैं	स ब म ल त है

Notice two things about the rhythmic feet. (a) With certain restrictions too technical to bother us now, they can be made up of any combination of long and short syllables that yields the requisite number of *mātrās*: thus a 6-*mātrā* foot could consist of three long syllables, or six short, or any combination of the two in any sequence. (b) The feet do not necessarily coincide with individual words or groups of words: thus the 4-*mātrā* foot

above consists of सब मिल- ( ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ), with the -त that completes the word मिलत falling into the next foot, -त है ( ˘ - ).

If all this metrical detail wearies you, ignore it and move on. I will at some point add recordings of the couplets included here.

In gnomic genres of the kind found in Vṛnd's *Nīti Satsai*, the first line postulates an abstract thought, and the second confirms it with a concrete illustration: thus in *dohā* 1, the first line talks in abstract terms about the necessity of 'effort', while the second gets its fingers sticky with a specific image. Reciters of such poems often repeat the first line before proceeding to the second. Knowing that much of the relish in such couplets comes from the matching of concrete image to abstract concept, they voice the repeated first line in a rising tone, implying 'Are you with me? Got that?' before delivering the second line, capping the rhyme of the first and rounding out the idea.

With Vṛnd's continuing help, we will now work methodically through a sequence of grammar points. My commentary will concentrate on the grammatical point under review and won't explain the whole poem; don't worry if you don't understand every detail of each couplet. The translations given here are as close as possible, forfeiting poetic subtlety for the sake of clarity in the literal meaning.

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#### GENERAL PRESENT

We start with present-tense verbs. Whereas the MSH present tense uses participles like देखता, Braj has देखत, with a very different rhythmic balance, the /a/ vowel after *kh* being fully sounded: *dekhata*. This participle may be followed by the auxiliary है, as in MSH; but often it isn't, because space is at a premium in poetry, and short is beautiful! Remember that the past-tense auxiliary हतौ is equivalent to MSH था (Braj आयौ हथौ = MSH आया था). Vṛnd shows us a present-tense auxiliary है below, in the second line:

धन अरु जोबन कौ गरब कबहूँ करिये नाँहि ।  
देखत ही मिट जात है, ज्यों बादर की छाँहि ॥ २ ॥

Never be proud of wealth and youthfulness –  
it disappears in a trice, like a cloud's shadow.

The second line begins देखत ही मिट जात है (MSH देखते ही मिट जाता है) 'dissolves as you watch', i.e. 'disappears before your very eyes'. The word अरु is MSH और; कबहूँ is MSH कभी; and remember that कौ is MSH का, reconfirming the masculine singular ending in *-au*. In बादर we see the ल / र sound-change again (MSH having बादल). The Braj and MSH word ज्यों 'like' appears very frequently in the second line of a *dohā*, where it introduces the terms of the illustrative simile.

Now Vṛnd gives us a new couplet guiding us towards *feminine* participles.

घटति बढ़ति संपति सुमति गति अरहट की जोय ।  
रीती घटिका भरति है भरी सु रीती होय ॥ ३ ॥

Wealth and wit [both] fall and rise – note the motion of the Persian wheel:  
the empty vessel fills; filled, it becomes empty [again].

Feminine participles may end in a short *-i* vowel (बोलति, देखति, आवति etc.), but the scribes are not always consistent: the *-i* ending is so short in pronunciation as to be virtually inaudible, and is often dropped from the orthography (allowing बोलति to be reduced to बोलत); the result, of course, is indistinguishable from the masculine.

In this couplet, the feminine participles घटति बढ़ति ('fall, rise') are playfully set alongside three feminine nouns – *not* verbs! – that also have this same *-ti* ending: संपति 'wealth', सुमति 'intelligence, good attitude, wit', गति 'state, condition'. Such playful usages are typical of Braj poetic construction; while not necessarily 'meaning' anything in a literal or translatable sense, they bring an organic cohesion to a phrase, suggesting parallels and connectivities between ideas.

In the couplet above, Vṛnd illustrates the concept of fluctuating fortunes with the graphic image of the camel-powered Persian wheel (अरहट), an irrigation device with a continuous chain of connected buckets (घटिका, here resonating nicely with घटति) which are filled and emptied as they turn in perpetual sequence. The hypnotically repeated chant of all those *-ti* endings imitates the endlessly clunking motion of the Persian wheel: life goes round and round, buckets are filled and emptied, fortune comes and goes.

Braj has a wide range of words for 'to see' or 'to look'. One of them has the stem जोइ- which is here used as an imperative (a 'command') in the spelling जोय.

#### SUBJUNCTIVE-PRESENT

We saw an example of the 'subjunctive present' in मिलै earlier. Think of it as a subjunctive verb (like MSH मिले, बोले and मिलूँ, बोलूँ etc.), but with the extra capacity of being used as a present tense. The third-person uses *-ai* and *-e* spellings rather indiscriminately. Remember that nazalization is also a little erratic, and is not quite the consistent marker of plurality that it is in MSH, which as you know distinguishes singular subjunctive बोले from plural बोलें.

In the subjunctive-present, verb stems such as आइ- 'come', जाइ- 'go', पाइ- 'find, attain' etc. often have the shortened third-person form आय, जाय, पाय (instead of आये, जाये, पाये).

Three examples of the subjunctive-present appear in the second line of the next couplet: मारै 'kills', ज्याबै 'gives life' and उपजै 'is produced':

जदपि सहोदर होय तोउ प्रकृति और की और ।  
बिस मारै ज्यावै सुधा उपजै एकहि ठौर ॥ ४ ॥



Though they be kindred, [people's] natures are various:  
poison kills, nectar revives, [though] they're born in the same place.

जदपि is MSH यद्यपि 'although'; सहोदर is a Sanskrit word (सह + उदर in sandhi) meaning 'born of the same womb: sibling, kindred'; तउ is MSH तो भी. The couplet refers to poison and nectar deriving from the selfsame ocean, whose churning produced poison and nectar (among other things) in a narrative from the Purāṇas. In writing this couplet about personality traits, Vṛnd may have been indicating some individuals at the Mughal court that gave him patronage: many of his couplets suggest that they may have been inspired by some particular event or personality, and it's easy to imagine the verses being recited to great acclaim in a courtly setting, reflecting its rivalries, jealousies and intrigues.

In this couplet, Vṛnd uses three kinds of vocabulary that feature widely in all varieties of Hindi, and we'll pause here to look at these categories.

1. 'tatsama' words: Sanskrit loanwords which are literally 'that-same', i.e. 'the same (*sama*) as that (*tat*)' – i.e. ones that appear in their original unchanged Sanskrit forms. The examples here are (a) सहोदर 'sibling'; (b) प्रकृति 'nature'; and (c) सुधा 'nectar'.

2. 'semi-tatsama' or *ardha-tatsama* words: Sanskrit loanwords that have been slightly modified in their vernacular dress – in effect they are still Sanskrit words, but their pronunciation reflects a vernacular touch. Thus विष 'poison' has become बिस, यद्यपि 'although' has become जदपि.

3. 'tadbhava' words: words which are 'that-become', i.e. 'derived (*bhava*) from that (*tad*)', i.e. from Sanskrit origins, but which have been shaped and eroded by the passage of time, undergoing various stages of transition and transformation. Certain *predictable* patterns of sound change determine these developments, which can be traced through Prakrit into the medieval and modern languages. Thus ठौर 'place' comes from Sanskrit स्थावर — even if isn't immediately obvious from the vernacular spelling! The word ठौर is common in Braj, less so in MSH (which has lost many fine and expressive words from its earlier periods, while gaining new ones through loans from various languages, including Sanskrit, Persian & Arabic, Portuguese, and English). Another example is अरहट in our earlier couplet: it comes from Sanskrit अरघट्ट, itself related to घटिका, a tatsama word used in that same couplet. Vṛnd may not have been aware of the connection, but the science of philology confirms it. Notice how the aspiration in घ has survived as ह in अरहट, whereas the consonantal ग quality has been eroded away. Another example of the

same process is in the verb कह- ‘to say’, which derives from the Sanskrit root कथ (also seen in tatsama कथा ‘recitation, story’).

Coming back to the verbs, you may wonder what the difference is between the two present tenses we’ve seen: the करत type and the करै type. The answer is that they’re often interchangeable, with little functional difference between them, though as we’ve seen, the latter often suggest a subjunctive sense (like its MSH cousin, करे). Keep an eye out for both forms and try to get a sense of their modern MSH equivalents in each example.

#### SOUND-CHANGE OF ल TO र

We have already seen several examples of a sound-change ल to र, and later we will come to further examples such as the nicely alliterative कारी रात for ‘dark night’. Note that this sound-change is mostly restricted to the *end* of a word. Can you spot another example in our next couplet below?

जो समझै जा बात कौं सो तिहि कहै विचार ।  
रोग न जानै जोतिसी बैद्य ग्रहन कौ चार ॥ ५ ॥



[Only] he who understands a certain matter should voice opinions about it;  
an astrologer understands not disease, [nor] a doctor the planets’ movement.

The sound-change lurks confusingly in चार, meaning not ‘four’ but चाल ‘motion, movement’; its use is encouraged here by the rhyme requirement. The word for ‘planet’ is ग्रह, and ग्रहन कौ चार means ग्रहों का चाल ‘the motion of the planets’. In this couplet, Vṛnd says that if you don’t know what you’re talking about, keep quiet. The beautiful construction of this couplet deserves close reading. Vṛnd stresses the opposition between two radically kinds of knowledge – medical and astrological – by setting the relevant phrases back-to-back: रोग न जानै जोतिसी has object before subject, बैद्य ग्रहन कौ चार has subject before object. The two different specialists, जोतिसी and बैद्य, are thus made to be neighbours in the word-order of the line. This back-to-back effect is called ‘chiasmus’, and to get a similar effect in English translation we would have to recast the line like this:

*disease is not understood by ASTROLOGER : DOCTOR [understands not] the planets’ movement*

Notice finally how the single verb phrase न जानै does duty for both the astrologer and the doctor – a sharing effect called ‘zeugma’. Through literary devices of this kind the poet is able to pack a great deal of meaning and inference into a very small space, and this art lies at the very heart of poetic composition.



**MASCULINE SINGULAR ENDINGS IN -AU**

We've seen several examples of the masculine *-au* ending that equates to MSH *-ā* (e.g. Braj कौ = MSH का, Braj गयौ = MSH गया), and no further explanation is needed. In the next couplet Vṛnd shows us *-au* endings in आपनौ (MSH अपना), and in the nouns उजेरौ 'brightness' and अँधेरौ (or अँधेरौ) 'darkness' (MSH उजेला and अँधेरा respectively) :

सब देखै पै आपनौ दोष न देखै कोइ ।  
करै उजेरौ दीप पै तरे अँधेरौ होइ ॥ ६ ॥

A person sees all, but sees not his own fault;  
The lamp gives light, but below there's darkness.

In the very opposite of a zeugma, the poet here deliberately *repeats* the word देखै (देखे...न देखै) to stress the contrast between seeing and not-seeing.

**भाषा VERSUS भाखा**

There is also a phonetics-and-script issue in the couplet above. Although most MSH-speakers pronounce ष as very similar or identical to श (making भाषा rhyme with आशा), in Braj ष tends to be pronounced ख, and in fact spellings such as भाखा were the norm in 'old' Hindi. Many Braj scribes used ष for both ष and ख, yielding spellings such as राष्यौ (= राख्यौ, MSH रखा) and दैष्यौ (= देख्यौ, MSH देखा), and not using ख at all. Thus in the couplet above, the phrase दोष न देखै may have been read as दोख न देखै and may have been *written* as दोष न देषै, the repeated consonant stressing the irony of the failure to 'find a fault' in oneself.

**OBLIQUE PLURALS**

In an earlier couplet we saw an oblique plural ending in the example ग्रहन (MSH ग्रहों). Other examples from elsewhere are: लोगन (MSH लोगों), दिनन (MSH दिनों) and भक्तन (MSH भक्तों). Can you spot another in this next couplet?

यों सेवा राजान की दीनी कठिन बताय ।  
ज्यों चुंबन ब्याली बदन सिंह मिलन के भाय ॥ ७ ॥

The service of kings is said to be as dangerous  
as kissing a serpent's mouth, or encountering a lion.

It's in राजान (MSH राजाओं), one of no less than five words ending -न in this couplet. The verse begins with यों 'thus', and ends के भाय, in which भाय is MSH भाव, here giving the sense 'in the manner of, as'. Interestingly, the serpent here is specifically female (ब्याली rather than the more common ब्याल, ब्याल) – deadlier than the male, perhaps, or is the longer

word preferred *metri causa*, ‘for metrical purposes’? As is usual in Braj texts, the word बदन reflects Sanskrit वदन ‘mouth’ rather than Persian बदन ‘body’ as in MSH and Urdu.

One particular oblique plural form needs special mention: बड़ेन, oblique plural of बड़ौ.

रहे समीप बड़ेन के होत बड़ो हित मेल ।  
सबही जानत बढ़त हैं वृक्ष बराबर बेल ॥ ८ ॥

**One should stay close to the great: there’s much benefit in bonds.  
Everyone knows that vines grow equally with the tree.**

### COMPOUND VERBS

Compound verbs are of course very common in MSH – think of expressions such as लिख देना, सोच लेना and खा जाना. The following couplet includes करि सकै (MSH कर सकता/सके) and धोय न सक्यो (MSH धो न सका ). See couplet 4 above for the reference to the ocean as ‘father of the moon’.

कोऊ दूर न करि सकै बिधि के उलटे अंक ।  
उदधि पिता तउ चंद्र को धोय न सक्यो कलंक ॥ ९ ॥

**Nobody can remove the adverse marks of fate;  
The ocean is its father, yet the moon could not cleanse its stain.**

In our next couplet, the verb रिसाय means ‘fumes in anger’, and the compound verb बचि जाय means ‘escapes, survives’ (with an -i stem in बचि of course):

बड़े बड़े सौं रिस करें छोटै सौं न रिसाय ।  
तरु कठोर तोरै पवन कोमल तृन बचि जाय ॥ १० ॥

**The great feel anger with the great: they don’t rage against the small.  
The wind breaks a hard tree: soft grass survives.**

My translation might well have included conjunctions (rather than colons) in both lines, giving the verse a slightly more explicit sense: ‘great people fume at their peers *but* not against their inferiors, just as hurricanes snap great trees *but* do not damage grass’. Braj poets often leave conjunctions such as ‘but’ or ‘and’ unstated, leaving the functions of such words to be inferred by verse structure alone: either the first line of the couplet contrasts with the second, or the first half-line within an individual line contrasts with its second half-line. The creative omission of conjunctions, in literary terms an ‘asyndeton’, is a powerful weapon in the poet’s rhetorical armoury: though small in themselves, such effects contribute to the ambiguity or multivalency of meaning that lie at the heart of poetry. The lexical choices made by the translator nearly always damage

these effects, making the translated text a narrower and less subtly 'layered' thing than the original.

Part of a poet's work is to achieve a sense of *integration* in the poem: to integrate sense and sound. Though one hardly notices it without looking closely, the couplet we've just read neatly sets two 't' nouns (तरु and तृन) in opposition to each other, matching them with paired but opposite 'k' adjectives (कठोर, कोमल); but the switch in order from 'noun + adjective' to 'adjective + noun' also cleverly suggests the very *different* fate of tree and grass respectively. Further, the word order is contrived in such a way as to sit कठोर and तोरै alongside each other, with internal rhyme. Such carefully contrived manipulations of phrasing are part and parcel of poetry of this kind – perhaps of all poetry worthy of the name.

A final point about compound verbs. In Braj, the two verbs in a compound often become inverted: लिखि दियो (MSH लिख दिया) might appear as दियो लिखि without any change to the meaning. This is especially common in rhymes, as it supplies extra rhyme possibilities for the grateful poet. Another such inversion appears in उठत...जागि (MSH जाग उठती है) in the following couplet, which describes the 'burning pain' (तपन) of a woman suffering from the anguish of love in separation – an affliction which reaches epidemic proportions in Braj poetry generally:

बिरह तपन पिय बात तैं उठत चौगुनी जागि ।  
जल के सींचे बढ़त है ज्यों सनेह की आगि ॥ ११ ॥



The anguish of lovesickness flares fourfold with the lover's airy words  
as the fire of love/oil increases when sprinkled with water.

The couplet plays on two different meanings of बात as 'talk' (from Sanskrit वार्त्ता) and as 'wind, breeze' (from Sanskrit वात), a play feebly reflected by 'airy words' in my translation. The lover's words are a breeze that whips up the flame of the beloved's feelings. Meanwhile सनेह (Sanskrit स्नेह) is both 'love' and highly combustible 'oil' – as used in a lamp, for example. Throwing water onto an oil fire makes it flare up violently. A third pun involves the word चौगुनी 'fourfold', built on गुन (Sanskrit गुण) whose numerous meanings include 'thread, lamp-wick'. So the poem is thick with puns and allusions. The second line begins with an adverbial phrase, जल के सींचे 'through sprinkling with water', using the -e form of a participle from सींचि- 'to sprinkle, irrigate'; but जल के may also be read as जलके 'burning', adding another flame to the fire of the poem.

Staying with fire but returning to the matter of inverted compound verbs, look for such a verb in this next verse:

सबै सहायक सबल के, कोऊ न निबल सहाय ।  
पवन जगावत आग कौं दीपहि देत बुझाय ॥ १२ ॥



**All are helpers of the strong, nobody is a help to the weak:  
wind rouses the fire but douses the lamp.**

The inversion comes in दीपहि देत बुझाय, which is equivalent to MSH दीप को बुझा देता ( है ). The word सबै (*saba* + emphatic suffix *-i*) is equivalent to MSH सभी; and कोऊ is MSH कोई भी (a suffixed उ or ऊ gives this emphasis).

As inverted compound verbs are so common, here's a further example:

नैना देत बताय सब हिय कौ हेत अहेत ।  
जैसें निरमल आरसी भली बुरी कहि देत ॥ १३ ॥



**The eyes reveal everything of the heart's love or lack of it,  
Just as a spotless mirror reveals good and bad.**

The compound verb देत बताय (MSH बता देते) is inverted, whereas कहि देत (MSH कह देती है) is in its natural or neutral order.

#### VERB STEMS

In MSH, the 'stem' of the verb has the form जा, बता, सुन, कर etc.; but the Braj verb stem usually ends in *-i*, yielding जाइ, बताइ, सुनि, करि. In Vr̥nd's next couplet, बोलि उठै 'cries out' and नचि नचि उठै 'breaks into a dance' both exemplify this:

मन भावन के मिलन के सुख को नाहिन छोर ।  
बोलि उठै नचि नचि उठै मोर सुनत घन घोर ॥ १४ ॥



**The joy of meeting one's heart's beloved has no limit;  
Hearing the clouds' rumble, the peacock cries out and breaks into a dance.**

For peacocks, the monsoon is the mating season, and is announced by the welcome sound of thunder (घन घोर); the peacocks celebrate at the prospect of uniting with their मन-भावन, 'heart's delight'. The word को in the first line is an alternative spelling for possessive कौ (MSH का).

Verb stems ending *-āi* (like बसाइ, जगाइ) can also be written *-āya* (बसाय, जगाय) with identical meaning.

जानि बूझि कै अजुगत करै तासौं कहा बसाय ।  
जागत ही सोवत रहै तिहिं को सकै जगाय ॥ १५ ॥

**What can be done with someone who deliberately does foolish things?  
Who can awaken someone who stays asleep even when awake?**

The phrase को सकै जगाय is MSH कौन जगा सकते / सके, with the two parts of the compound verb (जगाय and सकै) inverted as explained earlier. जगाय is the stem form of the verb (=MSH जगा from जगाना) and is an alternative for the spelling जगाइ.

The *-i* ending of the verb stem may easily be reduced to an *-a* ending (identical to the MSH form). In the following couplet, the rhyme-words बिचार and पसार may look like nouns but are in fact the absolutes of verbs meaning ‘to consider’ and ‘to spread, extend’.

पीछे कारज कीजिए पहिले पहुँच बिचार ।  
कैसे पावत उच्च फल बावन बाँह पसार ॥ १६ ॥

**Act later, having first considered your reach;  
How would a dwarf get a high fruit by stretching his arms?**

The repeated - √ √ rhythm in the final quarter of the couplet, बावन बाँह पसार, subtly suggests the repeated reaching-up of the unfortunate dwarf as he tries to reach the fruit beyond his grasp.

#### ABSOLUTIVES

‘Absolutives’ give a ‘having done, after doing’ sense. In MSH they feature one of two options: a stem form as in जा, कर, बच, देख, सुन, extended form, as in जाकर /जाके, करके, बचकर / बचके, देखकर / देखके, सुनकर / सुनके. Braj has equivalent patterns, with the option that the stem may have an *-i* ending, making जाइ, करि, बचि, देखि, सुनि. The following couplet neatly exemplifies both: the stem दौर (MSH दौड़, दौड़कर) and the extended बिचारिकै (MSH विचारकर):

अपनी पहुँच बिचारिकै करतब किरयै दौर ।  
तेते पांव पसारिये जेती लाँबी सौर ॥ १७ ॥

**Hurry to do what is to be done *after* considering your capacity;  
stretch out your legs according to the length of your quilt.**

The correlative-relative construction तेते...जेती is equivalent to MSH उतने...जितनी (such constructions are introduced more fully below).

## INFINITIVES &amp; VERBAL NOUNS

In MSH, the infinitive verb has a *-nā* ending (देखना, कहना), which changes to *-ne* in the oblique (as in देखने में, or कहने की बात). The equivalent infinitive in Braj ends simply *-na*, which is invariable: देखन, कहन.

बात कहन की रीति में है अन्तर अधिकाय ।  
एक बचन तैं रिस बढै एक बचन तैं जाय ॥ १८ ॥



There's great distinction in the way of saying things:  
through one word anger increases, through one word it goes.

Vṛnd is in playful mood again when he seems to imply a (false) parallel between two different forms: कहन is an infinitive verb of the kind just described, but बचन is a noun, similar in form to the infinitive but of course otherwise quite unrelated. बचन means 'word' – in MSH it appears in its tatsama form वचन, often meaning 'promise'.

In addition to this *-na* form, Braj often uses a gerund or 'verbal noun' with the ending *-ibau* (or *-ibo*): जाइबौ 'going', सुनिबौ 'hearing'. Like the *-au* ending of masculine nouns and adjectives, this *-au* changes to *-e* in the oblique: जाइबे में 'in going' and so on. Leaving Vṛnd to one side for a moment, let's hear from no less a person than Akbar, the Mughal emperor himself. In a deeply touching poem, he laments the passing of three of his favourite courtiers – 'Pithal' (Prithviraj), the famous singer Tansen, and especially his beloved minister, the famous wit Birbal:

पीथल सू मजलिस गई तानसेन सू राग ।  
हंसबो रमबो बोलबो गया वीरवर साथ ॥ १९ ॥ १



With Pithal went the soirée; with Tansen, music;  
Laughing, strolling, talking all went with Birbal's company.

We heard earlier that serving kings is dangerous, which is perhaps why nobody dared to 'kiss the serpent' and remind Akbar that *dohās* are supposed to rhyme! (Should the rhyme-words be रंग / संग ? ) Nevertheless it's a fine verse, with many subtleties. Akbar favours Birbal above the others by associating him with *three* favourite (but now lost) pastimes in comparison to the single ones given for Pithal and Tansen respectively, and furthermore he groups these three activities in a discrete list that occupies a full quarter-verse, thereby underlining their scope and comprehensiveness. Pithal and Tansen are associated with specific artistic activities, whereas the 'laughing, strolling and talking' associated with Birbal are organic parts of everyday life, and hence even more prone to being missed. The verb रम- is particularly hard to translate: it covers 'pleasurable

<sup>1</sup> Saryūprasād Agravāl, *Akbarī darbār ke hindī-kavi*. Lucknow, V.S. 2007 [AD 1950]), p. 89.

strolling’ and ‘taking enjoyment’, with a very laid-back sense of just ‘hanging out’ or other more actively sensual pleasures. The subtle switch from सू ‘with’ in the first line to साथ ‘with, in company of’ in the second adds further to the sense of loss, suggesting an *animate* connection between Birbal and the qualities associated with him: when he departed this life, they went off in company with him, hand in hand. Birbal must have been excellent company, as the famous ‘Akbar-Birbal’ stories imply. A mere thirteen words encapsulate all this meaning.

Given the Mughal context, the couplet has probably been transmitted through the Persian script (perhaps even in Akbar’s own hand, as he was not entirely illiterate), which would not distinguish हँसबो रमबो बोलबो from the more conventional Nagari spellings of हँसिबो रमिबो बोलिबो, (or for that matter हँसिबौ रमिबौ बोलिबौ) or the postposition सू from the more usual Braj spellings सो / सौ / सों / सौं (MSH से !). In the late medieval period, use of the Persian script was not restricted to Persian and Urdu; but the significant part it has played in the transmission of Braj texts tends to be overlooked today, with ‘Hindi’ and ‘Urdu’ separated into discrete camps.

#### PERFECTIVE VERBS

In the perfective (the simple past, as in ‘went’, ‘did’ etc.) Braj uses the so-called ‘ergative’ ने construction that is so taxing to novice learners of Hindi. In Braj poetry, the ने postposition itself is often absent, but its structure lives on, with agreement between verb and logical object following the usual rule, as in MSH राम ने कहानी सुनाई. You will hardly need reminding that this usage applies with transitive verbs only – not with intransitives like जा- ‘to go’. The second line of our next couplet features intransitive गये (agreeing with m.pl. राम ) and गँवाई (agreeing with f.sg. सीत).

मति फिर जाय बिपत्ति मैं राव रंक इक रीत ।  
हेम हिरन पाछें गये राम गँवाई सीत ॥ २० ॥



**The intellect warps in misfortune, in king and pauper alike;  
Gone after a golden deer, Rama lost Sita.**

The poet’s use of the verb गँवा- here is a little subversive: it seems to blame Rāma for carelessly or even recklessly ‘losing’ his wife. Notice also how the central positioning of the subject (‘Rāma’) allows this word to work with both clauses in the line; if you find this interesting, compare the centrally-positioned verb गई in Akbar’s *dohā* above. The last quarter of the couplet is wonderfully concise: राम गँवाई सीत is a truly laconic summary of the Rāmāyaṇa narrative!

The masculine perfective usually has forms like देख्यौ, सुन्यौ (MSH देखा, सुना): this is formed from the stem as in देखि and the ending *-au*, with the *-i* of the stem represented by

the semi-vowel /y/ — say ‘*dekhi-au*’ and you will hear the /y/ appearing automatically in your pronunciation.

नहिं इलाज देख्यौ सुन्यौ जासों मित्त सुभाव ।  
मधु पुट कोटिक देत तउ बिष न तजत बिषभाव ॥ २१ ॥

[I’ve] never seen or heard of a means whereby inherent character is removed:  
[one] adds countless drops of honey, yet venom doesn’t forsake its venomousness.

The verb कर- ‘to do’ is irregular in Braj (and in MSH too, what with its किया and की participles and its कीजिए imperative etc!). In Braj the usual perfective participle from करि- is कस्यौ (i.e. *karyau*, which could theoretically be written कर्यौ, though Braj scribes don’t often use the flying *reph* in participles). Alternative participles are कीन्ह, कीन्हौ, कीन, कीनौ and कीनो, and it’s this last form that we find in the final couplet of Vr̥nd’s *Satasāi*, tactfully fulsome in its praise of the poet’s imperial patron Azim-us-Shan:

अति उदार रिझबार जग साह अजीमुस्सान ।  
सतसैया सुनि वृन्द कौ कीनो अति सनमान ॥ २२ ॥

Most liberal, and delighting in the world, is Shah Azim-ush-Shan;  
hearing the *Satsāi* he showed Vr̥nd great honour.

Notice that the postposition कौ (MSH को) is nasalized. Although this is not a consistent feature, it does help distinguish this sense from the unnasalized possessive कौ (MSH का).

#### FUTURE TENSE

Looking to the future, we find much more variety in Braj than in MSH’s single set of बोलूँगा, बोलेगा forms. Braj has predictable equivalents of these (बोलूँगौ, बोलेगौ) but also boasts a set of *-h-* forms yielding first-person बोलिहौ, third-person बोलिहै, etc. Our next couplet has the third-person future form करिहै, equivalent to MSH करेगा –

अति हठ मत कर हठ बढ़ै बात न करिहै कोय ।  
ज्यौं ज्यौं भीजै कामरी त्यौं त्यौं भारी होय ॥ २३ ॥

Don’t practise extreme obstinacy! If obstinacy grows, nobody will speak [with you];  
The more a blanket is soaked, the heavier it becomes.

The soaked blanket stands as a metaphor for human patience: it can absorb or accommodate a certain amount of a failing such as obstinacy — but *only* so much, and no more. Notice how the interplay of retroflex and dental consonants in अति हठ मत...हठ...बात brings musicality to the verse. The second line uses an effective if commonplace parallelism, using the structure of the line to position relative (ज्यौं ज्यौं) and correlative



(त्यों त्यों) clauses in the two half-lines, separated by a comma-like caesura. We will return to the matter of relative-correlatives later. Meanwhile, Vṛnd's next couplet gives us a third-person future in आइहै 'will come':

कठिन कला हू आइहै करत करत अभ्यास ।  
नट ज्यों चालत बरत पर साधे बरस छमास ॥ २४ ॥



**Even a difficult skill will come with repeated practice –  
as an acrobat performing on a rope learns it in a year or a six-month.**

A word to note here is हू, 'even' or 'also', equivalent to MSH भी. And a word of warning about the orthography of future-tense words such as आइहै – typesetters are so accustomed to setting the MSH present-tense verb है as a separate word that they often mistakenly set a Braj future verb like आइहै as two words and print 'आइ है' ! Hmmm: Vṛnd should write a *dohā* about it.

The *dohā* above gives further examples of Vṛnd's skill in achieving phonetic cohesion. The first line is sewn together with 'क' alliteration, and the keyword बरत in the second line not only echoes करत करत in the first, but also anticipates पर and बरस in the phrasing that follows.

Here is one more example of the future:

फेर न ह्वैहै कपट सों जो कीजै ब्यौपार ।  
जैसैं हाँडी काठ की चढ़ै न दूजी बार ॥ २५ ॥



**If an enterprise is done with deceit, it won't work again,  
as a pot made of wood cannot be lifted [to the fire] a second time.**

The verb ह्वैहै is the future of हो-, equivalent to MSH होगा; कीजै is an abbreviated form of कीजिए, a Braj passive, and it is to this form that we turn next.

## PASSIVES

It is not only in the future tense that Braj has more variety than MSH: the passive also has two distinctive forms. Firstly, it shares with MSH the formula of 'perfective participle plus जा' (the so-called periphrastic passive), as in सुन्यौ जात 'is heard' (MSH सुना जाता है). The second type of passive ends *-ie, i-iyē, -iyai* or *-iyata*, as in सनिए / सुनिये, सुनियै, सुनियत 'is seen', लिखिए / लिखिये, लिखियै, लिखियत 'is written'. Spellings vary! The MSH word चाहिए / चाहिये, which of course means 'is wanted', is a unique survival of this old passive form in MSH. In this next couplet, look out for a passive of the verb उतार- 'to take off':

गुनी तऊ अवसर बिना आदर करै न कोइ ।  
हिय तैं हार उतारियै सयन समय जब होइ ॥ २६ ॥



**Though it's worthy, no one respects [a thing] out of context:  
the necklace is removed from the breast when it's sleeping-time.**

The necklace (हार) is valuable (गुनी), being a thing of quality (गुन, गुण); it is also गुनी in the sense that it has a 'thread' (गुन, गुण) running through it. Despite its high status or value, it is taken off (passive उतारियै = MSH उतारा जाता है) when it is not the right time (अवसर) for wearing jewellery, i.e. at bed-time (सयन समय).

The *-ie /-iai* ending of the passive is familiar to us as an *āp* imperative in MSH (सुनिए, सोचिए), and it can have this function in Braj too. In many contexts the passive and imperative senses overlap, so that either could be used in translation. For example, in the next couplet सेइयै is translated 'serve' (imperative mood), but could equally well be translated as either 'is/are served' or 'should be served' (both passive):

नृप गुरु तिय बिहिन सेइयै मध्य भाग जग माहिं ।  
है बिनास अति निकट तैं दूर रहें फल नाहिं ॥ २७ ॥



**Serve a king, guru, wife and sister from middle-distance in the world:  
there's disaster from [being] very close; no result if you stay remote.**

Notice how the little list of personnel in the first quarter-verse, नृप गुरु तिय बिहिन, is given an internal cohesion by a shared quality of short vowels: this shared phonetic quality suggests that all the members of the little group are united by a common feature.

### THE SUFFIXES -वारौ AND -हार

Like many poets in Sanskritic languages, Vṛnd is addicted to the punning potential of गुन (Sanskrit गुण), a word that is often hard to translate adequately, as we found just now. In the following, गुन appears within the word गनवारौ, in which the -वारौ suffix is equivalent to MSH -वाला. The resulting sense is 'having qualities', i.e. being well-made, but also something with a 'string attached' (गुनजुत, tatsama गुणयुक्त):

गुनवारौ संपति लहै लहै न गुन बिन कोइ ।  
काढ़े नीर पताल तैं जो गुनजुत घट होइ ॥ २८ ॥



**He who has qualities gains wealth — no one gains without qualities;  
one could draw water from hell [itself] if one had a well-made / roped bucket.**

At a pinch, the English expression 'well-made' might just work for both meanings, since a 'well-made bucket' could be interpreted as 'a bucket made for a well', i.e. equipped

with a rope; but English readers would not be as accustomed to such punning as their Braj cousins, and would miss the point!

Notice again how a chiasmus juxtaposes लहै with लहै, the repeat straddling the caesura: this deliberate phrasing marks a stark contrast between the two parallel statements, ‘gains / gains not’.

Similar in use to -वारौ is the suffix -हार; this is seen in the formulaic MSH word होनहार ‘about to be’, i.e. ‘promising, up-and-coming’ (as in होनहार लड़का), but in Braj it is also found with a wider range of verbs:

जानहार सो जाय अरु होनहार द्वै जाय ।  
रावन तैं लंका गयी बसे विभीषन पाय ॥ २९ ॥

**That which is to go, goes; and that which is to be comes about:  
Ravan lost Lanka; Vibhishan gained it and settled there.**

Rāma gave the defeated Rāvaṇ’s kingdom of Lanka to Rāvaṇ’s brother Vibhīṣaṇ (a devout Vaishnava); both Rāvaṇ’s loss of Lanka and Vibhīṣaṇ’s gaining of it were *fated* events, which is the point of the poem. Note that the pious Vibhīṣaṇ qualifies for an honorific plural (in the perfective verb बसे). Remember that the odd-looking word द्वै *hvai* is the stem form of the verb हो- ‘to be’ (equivalent to MSH हो).

The -हार suffix appears below attached to the stem मथनि- in मथनिहार, a ‘churner’:

गहत तत्व ग्यानी पुरुष बात बिचारि बिचारि ।  
मथनिहार तजि छाछ कौं माखन लेत निकारि ॥ ३० ॥

**A wise man considers a matter deeply and grasps its principle;  
abandoning the buttermilk, the churner extracts the butter.**

As if reviewing earlier lessons, Vṛnd shows us several old friends here: *-i* stems in बिचारि, तजि and निकारि; imperfective participles in गहत (compare MSH ग्रहण करना to grasp, grab or grip) and लेत; a clearly nasalized कौं; and both an inverted compound verb *and* a ल / र sound-change in लेत निकारि (MSH निकाल लेता है).

#### LEXICAL CHOICES AND WORD DERIVATIONS

These short notes cannot go into the complexities of word derivation and etymology, but it’s worth pointing out one or two important processes. Braj has access to the full range of Sanskritic and vernacular vocabulary, and poets can choose between a wide array of forms and spellings including tatsama and tadbhava forms and many points in between. In the couplet नैना देत बताय सब (13) we saw the tadbhava word हिय for ‘heart’; but elsewhere Vṛnd prefers हृदय, the tatsama version of this same word:

जाको हृदय कठोर तिहिं लगे न कोमल बैन ।  
मैन वान ज्यों पत्थर मैं क्यौं हू किए भिदै न ॥ ३१ ॥

**S/he whose heart is hard is impervious to soft words,  
Just as Kamdev's arrows can in no way pierce stone.**

(The relative-correlative जाको...तिहिं equates to MSH जिसका...उसे; the adverbial phrase क्यौं हू किए means 'however it's done, no matter how one tries'.) The middle syllable of the Sanskrit word मदन 'Kāmdev, Cupid' has been through a process of phonetic 'weakening', first becoming a semi-vowel (मयन) in Prakrit, then further reduced in the Braj spelling मैन (मैन in our example, the vowel nasality having been picked up from the nasal environment of म and न). A similar process leads from वचन to बैन ('word, speech'), the rhyme-word of line 1. Elsewhere, the word भवन 'house, building' (which already has a semi-vowel as its middle syllable) is spelt भौन in Braj; and one can see this process at work in some Hindi-speakers' pronunciations of, for example, the English word 'government' as गौरमेंट, in which the English 'v' and its adjacent vowels are simplified to 'au'. Only 'a person whose heart is hard' can be impervious to the fascination of these processes, which can be scientifically tracked and documented in such a way as to be able to predict how a sound will change over time; this is the academic science of philology. See the note on dictionaries below (especially Turner).

The syntax of Vṛnd's 'heart-of-stone' *dohā* does not quite coincide with its metrical construction in the first line: the caesura supplies a rhythmic break after तिहिं (MSH उसे), but in terms of syntax तिहिं belongs with the second half of the line, as part of the phrase तिहिं लगे न कोमल बैन. Notice also how the position of लगे at the beginning of the second quarter-verse gives it emphasis — the 'soft words' striking at the 'heart of stone', but to no avail. Such features are sometimes exploited very artfully by poets intent on particular meanings.

The couplet below — about foolishness — contains a couple of 'false friends', i.e. words that have an apparent but *deceptive* similarity to others: कहा means 'what?' (MSH क्या) and has nothing to do with MSH कहना, while को means 'who?' (MSH कौन) and has nothing to do with the को that marks an object as in MSH हमको. Vṛnd's next offering again uses को in a rhetorical question, in which 'who?' implies 'nobody!'

को सुख को दुख देत है देत करम झकझोर ।  
उरझै सुरझै आप ही धुजा पवन के जोर ॥ ३२ ॥

**Who gives joy, who sorrow? It is karma that shakes us:  
The flag twists and untwists itself in the power of the wind.**

**RELATIVE-CORRELATIVES**

In *dohā* 17 we saw a relative-correlative construction using तेते...जेती, equivalent to MSH उतने...जितनी; and in *dohā* 30, we saw जाको ... तिहिं, equivalent to MSH जिसका ... उसको. Such constructions abound in Vr̥nd's couplets, and for that matter in the *dohā* genre generally. In its habitual observations on human behaviour, the genre often finds itself dealing with comparisons, oppositions, and equivalences, and these often give rise to balanced expressions on the lines of 'if A, then B', or 'just as A is, so is B', or 'what a difference between A and B!', or perhaps 'where A is found, B is not far away'. Such binary equations lend themselves well to relative-correlative constructions; structurally they may be split *either* across the two halves of the line (hinged at the caesura) *or* across the two lines of the couplet itself.

जासौं जैसो भाव सो तैसो ठानत ताहि ।  
ससिहि सुधाकर कहत कोउ कहत कलंकी आहि ॥ ३३ ॥

As a person feels towards something, so he declares it to be:  
some call [the moon] 'hare-marked' or 'nectar-maker',  
some say it's 'the blemished one'.

The lunar patch that we call 'the man on the moon' is seen variously as a hare and a blemish, but the moon is also the source of nectar or ambrosia: so the choice of epithets for the moon depends on the sentiments of the observer – beauty (or its opposite) being in the eye of the beholder. The construction uses two parallel sets of relative constructions: जासौं ... ताहि (MSH जिससे ... उससे) and जैसो ... तैसो (MSH जैसा ... वैसा). Another example of such parallel sets comes in this next couplet:

जाको जहँ स्वारथ सधै सोई ताहि सुहात ।  
चोर न प्यारी चाँदनी जैसी कारी रात ॥ ३४ ॥

Where a person's self-interest is served, that thing pleases him:  
to a thief, the moonlight is not as dear as a dark night.


These constructions are very awkward to translate literally! Think of it like this: जिसका स्वार्थ जहाँ सधता है (पूरा होता है), वह [स्थान या तत्त्व] उसको अच्छा लगता है.

In the first line of this next couplet we find more relative and correlative words: जाकी (MSH जिसकी), जिती (MSH जितनी), and तेतौ (MSH उतना):

होय पहुँच जाकी जिती तेतौ करत प्रकास ।  
रवि ज्यौं कैसे करि सकैं दीपक तम को नास ॥ ३५ ॥

According to one's capacity, so he casts light:  
how could a lamp destroy darkness like the sun?

And here, in the second line, we find जेतो ... तेतौ (MSH जितना ... उतना):


सेवक साहिब के बढे बढे बड़ाई ओज ।  
 जेतो गिहरो जल चढे तेतौ बढे सरोज ॥ ३६ ॥ 

**With the rising of the master, the servant rises in rank and splendour;  
 the deeper the water grows, [just] so much grows the lotus.**

This last image has a sting in the tail: the lotus stem grows according to the depth of the water, so that its flower floats on the surface; but when the water recedes, the lotus is left high and dry. (The connection is made clear by the vocabulary choices: सरोज 'lotus' means 'pond-born', confirming its watery habitat.) As financial advisers dutifully remind us, investments can go down as well as up; and the employee's long-term security depends on the enduring status of his master. To a poet such as Vṛnd, dependant on the whimsical fortunes of a royal patron, such contexts must have seemed very real.

Notice the neat chiasmus across the caesura: बढे / बढे. The former is a non-finite participle ('on the *rising* of the master...'), whereas the latter is a finite verb ('the servant *rises*').

Space is at a premium in the *dohā*, and brevity is everything: so relative-correlative constructions are not always equipped with a full set of pronouns. In the next *dohā* the relative pronoun जो is dropped ([जो] बुरी करै), while English manages well without a correlative pronoun ("those who do evil, [they] are evil"):

बुरी करै तेई बुरे नाहिं बुरो कोउ और ।  
 बनज करै सो बानिया चोरी करै सो चोर ॥ ३७ ॥ 

**They who do evil are evil, someone *else* is not evil;  
 he who trades is a trader, he who thieves is a thief.**

**SOME IMPORTANT DIFFERENCES FROM MODERN STANDARD HINDI**


It's time now to bring together a few common words and usages where Braj forms are quite different from their MSH equivalents.

BRAJ	MSH
अरु	और (conjunction only)
कत	क्यों
कहा	क्या
कहूँ	कहीं
का	क्या; किस
कित	किधर, कहाँ
किहि	किस
को	कौन
कौ	का
जनि	मत, न
जा	जिस
जो	जो; अगर
ता	उस
तउ, तऊ	तो भी
तैं	से ('from; through')
पे, पै	पर
भयौ, भयो	हुआ
लौं	तक; जैसे
सौं, सों	से ('with; to')
हू	भी
हू भी	
हौं	मैं (nominative)

The Braj pronunciation of cerebral ष would approximate to the sound of ख, leading to two tendencies in Braj orthography. The first was to substitute ख for ष, writing (and saying) भाखा for भाषा; the second, by contrast, was to substitute ष for ख, writing (but not saying) षेत for खेत, देष्यौ for देख्यौ.

**AND FINALLY ...**

The *Satsai* genre was named ‘seven hundred’ because this is the number of couplets that it contains (सत्सई derives from Sanskrit सप्तशति through the Prakrit सत्तसई). In fact the number is only an approximate formula, and an individual *Satsai* often has more verses than its literal ‘seven centuries’; the edition of Vṛnd’s text used here has 714 couplets. In the tradition of composing verse tributes to an admired poet, and in gratitude to Vṛnd for being such a helpful tutor, I conclude by adding a couplet of my own:

जाके हिय महि लालसा रस चाखन की होय ।  
सो इहि भाखा कूप तैं घट काढ़े इक दोय ॥ ३८ ॥ 

He in whose heart may lie a desire to taste nectar  
should draw a bucket or two from this ‘vernacular’ well.

**A NOTE ON DICTIONARIES**

Although it is hard to find a single dictionary for reading Braj, the following are all extremely useful. Some of them are available online under the Chicago University ‘Digital Dictionaries of South Asia’ project — URLs noted accordingly.

Śyāmsundar **Dās**, ed., *Hindī Śabdsāgar*. 11 volumes. Varanasi, Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā, 1929. The most comprehensive Hindi-Hindi dictionary, with many pre-modern and dialect forms. <http://dsal.uchicago.edu/dictionaries/dasa-hindi/>

R.S. **McGregor**, *Hindi-English Dictionary*. Oxford, O.U.P., 1993. The standard Hindi-English dictionary, and an excellent source for reliable etymologies.

J.T. **Platts**, *A Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindi, and English*. London, 1884. Still an essential resource after all these years. <http://dsal.uchicago.edu/dictionaries/platts/>

Premnārāyaṇ **Ṭaṇḍan**, *Brajbhāṣā Sūrkoś*. 2 vols. Lucknow, Lucknow University, 1974. This dictionary in fact ranges more widely than the poetry of the eponymous Sūrdās; and it includes a Hindi-medium Braj grammar in the appendix. Not easy to track down, but very useful if you can find it.

R.L. **Turner**, *A comparative dictionary of Indo-Aryan languages* (London, 1962-1966; with three supplements, 1969-1985). The best source for reliable information about etymologies of Indo-Aryan words. <http://dsal.uchicago.edu/dictionaries/>.